Opera buffa in Mozart's Vienna

Edited by Mary Hunter and James Webster

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Introduction

Mary Hunter and James Webster

Opera buffa was immensely popular in the second half of the eighteenth century. It was performed across Europe from Naples to St. Petersburg and London, in courts, court-sponsored theatres and public theatres, by great virtuosi and by traveling repertory companies. Vienna was no exception to the pan-European enthusiasm for this genre; between 1783 and 1792 some seventy-five *opere buffe* were produced there (of which twenty-two were written specifically for Vienna). Of this sizable repertory, however, the only operas now performed with any regularity are Mozart's three settings of librettos by Lorenzo Da Ponte: *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte*. These canonic operas have typically been studied as isolated masterworks, with little or no reference to their original artistic and social contexts. It is becoming increasingly clear, however, that Mozart's operas responded directly to those contexts, and were, indeed, part of an elaborate artistic, cultural, and social "dialogue," involving not only composers, but civic and court authorities, impresarios, librettists, performers, and audiences as well. This book attempts to elucidate the nature of that dialogue more fully than has hitherto been the case.

The book does not, however, present Mozart simply as the sole surviving paradigmatic representative of one corner of this popular genre. Rather, despite its plainly declarative title, it raises a number of questions about the genre of opera buffa in Vienna and Mozart's relation to it. What, for example, does it mean, historically or methodologically, to locate (and thus partially to define) an entire genre by reference to the brief residence of a single composer in a given place? What might it mean to raise the same (primarily contextual) issues about Mozart's operas that we routinely

raise about those of his contemporaries; conversely, what might it mean to ask the same questions of "the others" that have always been asked of Mozart? If composers and compositions are the focus of the book, as the title might suggest, where and how do librettists and singers, patrons and audiences, set-designers and prompters fit in? What are the historical, intellectual, and methodological implications of looking at opera buffa in terms of multiple structures – not only musical and textual, but also dramaturgical, scenographic, performative, and social? Although this book cannot fully answer any of these questions, it does address them all, whether explicitly or implicitly, in one essay or in several. The essays do not present a historical survey of opera buffa, but rather suggest a broad problematics of that genre as it flourished in late eighteenth-century Vienna, thus simultaneously evoking and moving beyond the particularities of our given place, time, and repertory.

THE PROBLEMATICS OF OPERA BUFFA

It has only recently become possible to think of opera buffa as having anything as sophisticated as a "problematics." One reason for this is that *opere buffe* were both peripatetic and mutable, frustrating even the most basic scholarly study. A given work could have as many as thirty or more productions, no two of which were exactly alike (indeed, it seems that significant changes were made even within production runs). New titles were often given to "old" works, minor characters were added and dropped, or major characters renamed as circumstances demanded, replacement singers received new arias in place of the originals (or substituted their own tried-and-true favorites), and pasticcio practices of various kinds were the norm. Although librettos from many of these productions survive – indeed, they form the chief record of the peregrinations of particular works – they often do not fully match the surviving scores. Moreover, the scores themselves often represent

several layers of production and performance, which are virtually impossible to disentangle.[1]

These logistical problems have been immensely eased in recent years with the publication of reference sources like Sartori's *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800*,[2] *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*,[3] and reprints of various local or regional library catalogues. These sources permit identification of the various versions of a given work, as well as its relation to other versions of the same work, other works on similar themes, other works in the same repertory, and so on. They also allow one to trace in some detail, if not with complete accuracy, the career of a given work, from autograph to revised production, to pasticcio-in-translation or "Favourite Songs." In addition to these recent comprehensive reference sources, in the last quarter-century there have been a number of groundbreaking studies of the genre,[4] discussions of particular aspects or repertories within

1 Of particular relevance to this volume is John Platoff's review-essay, "A New History for Martín's *Una cosa rara*," *JM* 12 (1994) 85–115. See also Dexter Edge, "The Original Performance Material and Score for Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*," paper presented at the 1995 meeting of the American Musicological Society.

2 Milan: Bertola and Locatelli, 1990–95, 7 vols.

3 London: Macmillan, 1992, 4 vols.

4 Among the most notable are Wolfgang Osthoff, "Die Opera Buffa," in *Gattungen der Musik in Einzeldarstellungen: Gedenkschrift Leo Schrade*, ed. Wulf Arlt, Ernst Lichtenhahn and Hans Oesch (Berne and Munich: Francke, 1973), vol. 1, pp. 678–743; Reinhard Strohm, *Die italienische Oper im 18. Jahrhundert* (Wilhelmshaven: Heinrichshofen, 1979); Charles R. Troy, *The Comic Intermezzo: A Study in the History of Eighteenth-Century Italian Opera* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980); Silke Leopold's contributions to Carl Dahlhaus, ed., *Die Musik des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Laaber: Laaber, 1985), pp. 73–84, 84–89, 89–99, 147–65, 180–87, 239–67; David Kimbell, *Italian Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Part IV: "The tradition of comedy." All of these recent studies pay some homage to the pioneering work of Andrea Della Corte, including *L'opera comica italiana nel Settecento: studi ed appunti* (Bari: Laterza, 1923); *Paisiello; con una tavola tematica* (Torino: Fratelli Bocca, 1922); and *Piccinni (settecento italiano): con frammenti musicali inediti e due ritratti* (Bari: Laterza, 1928); also to Hermann Abert, "Paisiellos Buffokunst und ihre Beziehungen zu Mozart," *AMw* 1 (1918–19), 402–21; repr. in Abert, *Gesammelte Schriften und Vorträge* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1929), pp. 365–96.

opera buffa,[5] studies of Mozart's contemporaries and predecessors,[6] and too many studies of individual composers to do justice to here. Suffice it to say that among the composers here discussed in any detail, several are the subjects of significant recent work: Paisiello boasts an exhaustive thematic catalogue,[7] Salieri is now the subject of three full-scale biographies,[8] and Stephen Storace and Martín y Soler are both the subjects of groundbreaking dissertations.[9] Much more research on particular works, individual composers, and the genre more broadly considered will doubtless follow.

But beyond the fact that more and more of this material is becoming available for musicological development, why should this long-forgotten body of musical drama be of interest? What are the virtues of opera buffa in Vienna as an object for scholarly study; what does it have to say to us today? The essays in this book suggest two large classes of answer to these questions. The first and perhaps most obvious is indicated in the title, and is stated or implied in every essay in the book. "Opera buffa in Mozart's Vienna" is the repertory of works performed on the same stage, by the same singers, and to the same audiences as Mozart's three great

5 Michael F. Robinson, *Naples and Neapolitan Opera* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); Kunze, *Don Giovanni*; Muraro, *I vicini*, vol. 2, *La farsa musicale*, ed. David Bryant.

6 Most notable are: Muraro, *I vicini*; Abert, "Paisiellos Buffokunst"; Andrew Steptoe, *The Mozart-Da Ponte Operas: The Cultural and Musical Background* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

7 Michael F. Robinson with the assistance of Ulrike Hofmann, *Giovanni Paisiello: A Thematic Catalogue of his Works*, 2 vols. (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1991–94).

8 Rudolph Angermüller, *Antonio Salieri: Sein Leben und seine weltlichen Werke unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner "großen" Opern*, (Munich: Katzbichler, 1971); Volkmar Braunbehrens, *Maligned Master: The Real Story of Antonio Salieri*, trans. Eveline L. Kanes (New York: Fromm, 1992); John A. Rice, *Salieri and Viennese Opera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming).

9 Jane Catherine Girdham, "Stephen Storace and the English Opera Tradition of the Late Eighteenth Century" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1988); Dorothea Link, "The Da Ponte Operas of Martín y Soler" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1991).

Da Ponte settings. Mozart is inevitably at the center of this book, even though he is not its subject. To study this repertory's conventions and circumstances with Mozart as an explicit and constant reference point is to ask of it the questions we are accustomed to asking of Mozart's operas; it implies that the analytical and critical methods applied to his masterpieces will both illuminate the works of his contemporaries and bring into relief the particularities of his genius.

But there is an opposite answer, equally though negatively focused on Mozart, which suggests that opera buffa is interesting precisely because it is *not* canonic, and does *not* bear the cultural burden of Mozart's masterworks. The genre can be seen without apology as embedded in its time and place, as governed by both social and aesthetic conventions, and can be interrogated in ways we are not accustomed to apply to Mozart. The methods and questions that emerge from studying an unfamiliar repertory with few claims to universality or transhistorical value may then, applied to Mozart, shed new light on his masterpieces. The complex relations between "positive" and "negative" Mozart-centricity are examined in the first section below.

A second sort of response sees the value of studying opera buffa, including Mozart, as part of the history of opera; as demonstrating larger historiographical and methodological problems in a special way, or with special clarity. For example, opera buffa was located squarely between "art" and "entertainment": it was devoted to contemporary topics and characters[10] and sensitive to a variety of contemporary aesthetic trends, yet equally rooted in the age-old traditions of improvisational comedy. As such, it provides a unique record of the *mentalité* of a given historical moment.[11] On the

10 Even its reworkings of Classical and other early myths and legends are made contemporary in various ways. The Bertati/Gazzaniga *L'isola di Alcina* (1772), for example, in which four contemporary gentlemen stumble out of a boat onto Alcina's enchanted island, commenting that they've arrived in a legend, is a particularly obvious example of self-conscious updating.

11 This is as true for venues like Vienna which used mainly "borrowed" repertory as for venues like Venice with a higher proportion of "native" pieces.

other hand, opera buffa's evident situatedness in its time and place also poses methodological problems. How accurately, and in what ways, does it represent the world it appears to imitate? How is it to be analysed or interpreted, particularly given that its verbal and musical texts (like those of improvisational comedy) only begin to suggest its meanings? Opera buffa seems to have marched inexorably towards respectability, necessitating not only an increasingly clear fixing of its text (verbal and musical), but also a rapprochement with the "opposed" genre of opera seria. Yet how, under these circumstances, are we to distinguish one genre of opera from another, especially when the *audible* signs of genre are less, or differently, marked than the distinctions of social class and of theoretical speculation to which they ostensibly correspond?

Although some essays clearly fall into one class of answer or the other – contextualizations of Mozart or methodological explorations – others respond in multiple ways to the question of why opera buffa is of interest. In what follows, we first discuss the "Mozart-centric" aspects of our authors' answers, moving from historical and cultural contexts to analytical or methodological ones. We then focus on more general methodological questions. That is to say, the organization of this introduction cuts across the thematic organization of the book; indeed, one of our purposes is to indicate both some underlying commonalities and some of the latent tensions among the essays.

MOZART IN CONTEXT

Historical and cultural issues

Although an understanding of Mozart's operatic context surely enriches our understanding of his masterpieces, the essays in this book suggest with startling clarity that this process of enrichment is multifaceted, and the results diverse and contentious. Indeed, even the apparently straightforward question of how to define Mozart's "context" has several possible answers, each with its own conceptual and methodological ramifications.

Let us begin with the historical or social context. For many historians, the abundance of information about theatrical and operatic life in Vienna in the 1770s and 1780s fuels the desire to paint a richly detailed picture of Mozart's immediate surroundings;[12] to understand (at least) the physical aspects of the theatre, Mozart's opinions of his contemporaries and theirs of him, and the politics of opera commissioning, production, and reception. This historicizing of Mozart's output (here brilliantly represented by Daniel Heartz and Bruce Alan Brown) implicitly valorizes that output; their interest in the detailed picture depends at least in part on the fact that it nourishes a fuller sense of familiar and much-loved works. The distinction between work and context in such studies is clear and strong; the way in which the contextual nourishment enhances appreciation of the works themselves is not – and need not be – specified.[13] This view permits the historical and the aesthetic imaginations to operate in different, even unrelated, realms; one is invited to exercise one's historical imagination in acts of homage to a set of essentially or potentially ahistorical aesthetic experiences. In an essay setting out a framework for cultural studies, Stephen Greenblatt notes that the "powerful and effective oscillation between the establishment of distinct discursive domains and the collapse of those domains into one another" is a defining attribute of cultural and intellectual life in our society.[14] These essays clearly represent the former pole of that oscillation.

In contrast to Brown and Heartz, Tia DeNora tends to "collapse" the domains, taking the new-historicist position that a work of art is

12 The most obvious and easily accessible sources include Zechmeister; Michtner; Rudolph Payer von Thurn, *Josef II als Theaterdirektor: Ungedruckte Briefe und Aktenstücke aus den Kinderjahren des Burgtheaters* (Vienna: Heidrich, 1920); Johann Pezzl, *Skizze von Wien* (Vienna 1786–90) partially translated in H. C. Robbins Landon, *Mozart and Vienna* (New York: Schirmer, 1991), and of course Mozart's letters.

13 Obvious exceptions to this involve instances where the work in question refers to or directly reflects an element of its context. A clear and relevant case in point is Daniel Heartz's "An Iconography of the Dances in the Ballroom Scene of *Don Giovanni*," in Heartz, *Mozart's Operas*, pp. 179–194.

14 Stephen Greenblatt, "Towards a Poetics of Culture," in H. Aram Veeser, ed., *The New Historicism Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 8.

a "cultural workspace" or, in Greenblatt's terms, "the product of a negotiation between a creator or a class of creators, equipped with a complex, communally shared repertoire of conventions, and the institutions or practices of society."[15] In other words, context is not simply something that, as it were, surrounds a work and may affect it, but is in some crucial sense part of it. By linking Mozart's operas with the Viennese enthusiasm for botany and a newly sexualized notion of plant life, DeNora suggests that Mozart's *opere buffe* participated in the emergence of what Thomas Laqueur calls the "two-sex" conceptual model of sex and gender, in which male and female are seen as profoundly differentiated and essentially opposed, rather than as superficially differentiated versions of the same basic plan (the "one-sex model").[16] DeNora indicates Mozart's (and Da Ponte's) awareness of botany by pointing to flower-names for women, garden-settings, and a variety of botanical comments in the operas. One might add, continuing the fusion of text with context, that Mozart's Viennese operas model the emerging paradigm of binary sexual division in part by avoiding the sexually complicating figure of the castrato, by symmetrically opposing the soprano "pole" with a bass voice, and by focusing almost exclusively on matrimony. Neither these features nor the verbal ones mentioned by DeNora differentiate Mozart's *opere buffe* from those of his contemporaries, of course, nor are they meant to. She relies on the convenient appurtenances of canonicity accorded to Mozart – readily available editions, recordings, criticism, and so forth – but avoids the implication that Mozart's canonic status makes him an especially valuable or reliable representative of his time and place. Indeed, she implies that one will find similar versions of this cultural model in other *opere buffe* regardless of canonic status.

The essays by Paolo Gallarati, Jessica Waldoff, and Michael F. Robinson share with DeNora's the sense not only that text and

15 Ibid., p. 12.

16 Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). Laqueur insists, even while constructing the dichotomy between the one- and two-sex models, that each is embedded in the other.

context are embedded in each other, but also that the most pertinent contexts for Mozart are the broadest cultural and intellectual trends of his time, as long as they are grounded in verifiable historical connections.[17] They differ, however, in the ways they use Mozart's canonicity; whereas for DeNora the canonic status of Mozart's Da Ponte settings is in some sense a fortunate accident, Gallarati and Waldoff, and to a lesser extent Robinson, base their arguments on the particular genius of Mozart's Da Ponte settings. Gallarati is the most explicit regarding Mozart's "originality," and his essay serves as a salutary counter or challenge, both to the implicit political values of most of the other essays, which tend toward the egalitarian, and to their methodological values, which tend to emphasize historicizing over evaluating. Drawing on his earlier close analysis of Mozart's text-setting procedures,[18] and taking the ostensibly old-fashioned position that Mozart is simply superior both to the genre which spawned his comic masterpieces and to the run of composers who wrote in that genre, Gallarati rejects Mozart's contingent local context in favor of the pan-European one, and his well-documented competitive relations with other operatic composers writing for Vienna[19] in favor of a

17 In DeNora's case that connection is Mozart's familiarity with the von Jacquin family; in Gallarati's, it is Mozart's library and demonstrable theatrical interests.

18 In *La forza delle parole: Mozart drammaturgo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1993).

19 Daniel Heartz has documented the relation between *Le nozze di Figaro* and Paisiello's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in "Constructing *Le nozze di Figaro*" (Heartz, *Mozart's Operas*, pp. 133–56). Dorothea Link has noted Mozart's reliance on Martín in "L'arbore di Diana: A Model for *Così fan tutte*," in Sadie, *Wolfgang Amadè Mozart*, pp. 362–73. Edmund J. Goehring's essay in the present volume also suggests a relationship between *Così fan tutte* and *Una cosa rara*. Several scholars have noted competitive dialogue between Mozart and Salieri: see especially Rice, "Rondò vocali di Salieri e Mozart per Adriana Ferrarese," in Muraro, *I vicini*, pp. 185–209), and the stunning discovery by Rice and Bruce Brown ("Salieri's *Così fan tutte*," *COJ* 8 [1996], 17–43) that Salieri started to set *Così fan tutte* before Mozart did. Mozart's dealings with other composers also hint at competition. His comic use of "Come un agnello" from Sarti's *Fra i due litiganti il terzo gode* in the second act finale to *Don Giovanni* is a case in point: the original aria describes a lamb going to the slaughter in an overblown metaphor for the singer's amorous miseries; Don Giovanni's inevitable fate turns this conceit – and the self-conscious naïveté of its music – inside out.

more speculative "progressive" alignment with Diderot and Lessing. In repudiating the value of opera buffa's frank manipulation of convention in favor of a rhetoric of originality and truth, then, Gallarati presents Mozart as a romantic genius, always already "universal" in his aims, and almost by definition at odds with any local or immediately generic conventions.

Although Waldoff and Robinson also place Mozart in a broad cultural context, they differ radically from Gallarati in their sense of Mozart's relation to conventions. Waldoff places Mozart in the canonic tradition of Aristotelian dramatic principles, but sees this tradition as a set of conventions, ripe for manipulation. Her point is that the particular genius of Mozart's and Da Ponte's version of *Don Giovanni* lies in the fact that the dramatic trajectory, having prepared the expected moment of peripeteia and recognition on the hero's part, diverges in such a way that everyone *but* the hero experiences this reversal. Mozart's and Da Ponte's rejection of the pervasive dramatic convention of heroic peripeteia does not render that convention irrelevant; rather, it is precisely their reinterpretation and manipulation of well-understood dramatic "rules" that engenders the enduring appeal of the work. The work's deepest meanings, then, emerge from its play with conventions.

Robinson also invokes the notion of peripeteia and concentrates on the ending of *Don Giovanni*, particularly insofar as it calls into question the generic conventions of comedy. This essay asks not only what it could mean to construct a context for a Mozart opera but, more generally, how scholars of canonical composers and works negotiate the competing claims of originality and adherence to convention. Robinson justifies his arguments about *Don Giovanni*'s contested generic affiliation – "black" comedy? comedy with a "tragic" ending? – by appealing to the local conventions of finale construction in the Viennese opera buffa repertory. He argues that it is justifiable to end the opera with Don Giovanni's cry as he is dragged down to hell, not only because some evidence suggests that Mozart may have considered or even sanctioned such an ending, but also because it would have

conformed (if barely) to the tonal and dramatic conventions of Mozart's operatic milieu.

Ronald J. Rabin and Edmund J. Goehring go even further, in that they treat convention not as the consciously or unconsciously manipulated background to works of art, but as their very subject. Both essays are revisionist readings: Rabin's of an aria (Figaro's "Aprite un po'") and Goehring's of a historical/critical assumption. Rabin suggests that Mozart brilliantly *deploys* a conventional buffo aria to dramatize Figaro's vulnerability: having demonstrated his powers of rhetorical, dramatic, and psychological invention throughout the opera, Figaro now dramatizes his own exhaustion and near-defeat by resorting to an aria that precisely plays out all the expectations of its type. Mozart's dramatically timely and undisguised resort to convention thus suggests Figaro's psychological complexity. Psychological realism is often considered one of the hallmarks of Mozart's genius; it is also often considered a more general attribute of the Enlightened bourgeois aesthetic. Goehring suggests that the illusion of realism, as part and parcel of the mid-century sentimentalist movement, is also a convention, no less a deployable theatrical device than any other, particularly in opera. Mozart's comedies attain their richness by absorbing and reconfiguring in subtle and brilliant ways a variety of theatrical conventions, including the illusion of psychological realism.

In short, Mozart's historical context can be many things; from the most immediate, narrowly generic repertory (Viennese opera buffa) to the most comprehensive, broadly generic conventions (comedic happy endings, dramatic peripeteia); from the events and institutions bearing materially on his works (the cultural politics of the Habsburg court, for example) to a variety of more or less abstract intellectual and social structures (sentimentalism, or new notions of gender). Moreover, his connection to any of these contexts can be figured as conscious participation or rebellion, unconscious cultural embeddedness, or mere contemporaneity – or any combination of these. As with any major artist, the search for historical context is open-ended and does not lead to definitive answers.

Comparison and evaluation

Absent from the contributions discussed so far is any extended consideration of the value of Mozart's music in comparison to that of his contemporaries, and indeed of the larger question of how one might begin to consider questions of value. John Platoff's essay on the sextet from *Don Giovanni* proceeds from just such an evaluative issue: his feeling that the transition into the final section is both harmonically and dramatically unsatisfactory. He argues that this ensemble, particularly the V/vi–I progression between the end of the Andante and the beginning of the Molto allegro, is imbued with musical procedures more characteristic of instrumental music than of operatic music. He supports this observation by comparing this moment to structurally similar transitions between "movements" in opera buffa ensembles from the contemporary Viennese repertory, in which no equivalent harmonic move is found. Pointing out that most of Mozart's operatic contemporaries composed far more operas than instrumental pieces, he concludes that they employed effective if not original conventions of musico-dramatic organization, whereas Mozart, with his richer harmonic palette and more sophisticated control of "purely musical" form, could on the one hand produce musical drama of unparalleled insight, tension, and subtlety (as in the Andante section of the *Don Giovanni* sextet), but on the other, could also miscalculate.

Platoff's essay raises not only the contested question of the relation between operatic and instrumental music, but also the unresolvable issue of analytical methods and assumptions for Mozart in relation to "the others." As long as the focus of study remains Mozart's relations to contemporary musical or dramatic practice, the analytic procedures appropriate to and possible for his individual, canonical works, and those appropriate to and possible for "contemporary practice" (i.e. the dozens of operas by Paisiello, Salieri, Anfossi, Sarti, Righini, Guglielmi, Storace, Gazzaniga, and others) are likely to remain incompatible. To take just one example, what may count as a single "movement" in an ensemble by a contemporary (a section unified by tempo, meter and (sometimes)

key), may count as two or more in Mozart, if subtleties of motivic organization, cadential structure, rhetoric, or accompanimental texture are taken into account, as they often are in analyses of individual masterworks, but tend not to be in studies of large or less-well-known repertories.

One answer to this inequality in analytical method is to abandon or sidestep the attempt to codify contemporary practice as if it were some sort of monolith, and to compare individual numbers (or entire works) of Mozart to those by other composers, thus acknowledging the possibility of differences within the repertory. Most of the numerous efforts in this direction have been dedicated to demonstrating Mozart's operatic origins or sources; they either implicitly assume or explicitly argue for Mozart's superiority.[20] Because they are essentially about Mozart and use methods rooted in Mozart criticism, such studies (insofar as they are analytical at all) ordinarily do not problematize their analytical methods.

James Webster's essay does exactly that. Applying to a Salieri aria (the Cavaliere Ripafratta's "Vo pensando" from *La locandiera*) the sorts of analytic techniques usually deemed unproblematically applicable to Mozart, he first demonstrates its musico-dramatic competence. However, he then explicitly refuses to make either of the usual next moves: to validate Salieri's aria on the basis of its adherence to procedures associated with Mozart's genius, or to compare Salieri and Mozart to the former's disadvantage. Webster's general point is that analysis alone cannot describe or confer value. Salieri's clever

20 Abert, "Paisiellos Buffokunst"; Kunze, *Don Giovanni*; Charles C. Russell, *The Don Juan Legend before Mozart: With a Collection of Eighteenth-Century Opera Librettos* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993); Heartz, "Constructing *Le nozze di Figaro*"; Brown, "Beaumarchais, Mozart and the Vaudeville: Two Examples from *The Marriage of Figaro*," *MT* 127 (1986), 261–65; Daniela Goldin, "Mozart, Da Ponte e il linguaggio dell'opera buffa" and "In margine al catalogo di Leporello," in *La vera fenice* (Turin: Einaudi, 1985), pp. 77–163. Steptoe, *The Mozart-Da Ponte Operas*, describes some local influences on *Così fan tutte*, as does Edmund Goehring in "The Comic Vision of *Così fan tutte*: Literary and Operatic Origins" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1993). See also Volker Mattern, *Das Dramma Giocoso: La Finta Giardiniera: Ein Vergleich der Vertonungen von Pasquale Anfossi und Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart* (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 1989).

embodiment of the Cavaliere's indecision can best be discovered by Schenkerian analysis, but it is no more a guarantee of the value of "Vo pensando" that the fractured *Urlinie* has dramatic relevance than it is a guarantee of the value of "Porgi amor" that Schenkerian analysis reveals the progress of the Countess's self-understanding.

This point does not invalidate the question implied by Platoff's essay of how (or whether) we should level the analytic playing field when comparing a single canonical composer to his contextual repertory. But it does open new perspectives about the value of analysis, and the analysis of value, in opera. Neither Platoff's nor Webster's essay prescribes how to relate Mozart to his context, but in laying out so clearly the minefield of theoretical dichotomies – Mozart vs. "the others," Mozart vs. "an Other," operatic practices vs. instrumental practices (compositional and analytical), analysis vs. both interpretation and contextualization – both writers suggest a number of promising directions for future work.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

If our control of the sources for opera buffa is rapidly improving, it does not follow that we should uncritically proceed to treat this genre in the same intellectual and historiographical framework that has guided most research about most music from the common practice period. Most questionable in the context of opera buffa is the traditional orientation towards the individual composer as sole author and the musical score as the primary authority for the work. Indeed the sources themselves suggest that these assumptions are misplaced – or at least inadequate – in this context. For example, although composers were regularly mentioned in contemporary accounts of opera-going,[21] and were indicated prominently in most

21 Zinzendorf, for example, whose diaries give us one of the most complete accounts of the Viennese operatic scene during the Mozart decade, almost always mentions the composer of the piece he is describing, especially the first time he sees it. Michtner is one of the best and most easily available sources for Zinzendorf's comments.

librettos as well as in scores, the performers attracted far more attention from almost every segment of the audience. In the vast majority of contemporary commentary on individual operas, the question of whether a performance was reproducing a text with sufficient fidelity was scarcely raised, and was never as prominent as discussion of the sensuous and performative qualities of the immediate event. One recent response to this situation has been an increase in scholarly attention to the careers and performing strengths of singers. Daniel Heartz's work has long been exemplary in this respect; his attention here to Baglioni, Carestini, and Carattoli continues that tradition. Patricia Lewy Gidwitz's research on Mozart's singers is perhaps the single most extensive project on the subject, complemented by John Rice's studies of Adriana Ferrarese and Maria Marchetti Fantozzi.[22]

Although this volume includes no full-scale studies of singers, the essays suggest a variety of ways of thinking about opera buffa as "performative." The most striking example is Julian Rushton's study of tessitura as an index of characterization. On one level an extension of the familiar notion that Mozart "tailored" his arias for particular voices, on another level it suggests that the notion of characterization was for Mozart inseparable from performance, and that it arose as much from the "grain" of a particular vocal tessitura as from the actions of the character or the musical *topoi* attached to those actions.[23] But several other authors transfer the notion of performance from the domain of the singer to that of the character (where it is seen as a component of dramatic action rather than a matter of sonority). Ronald J. Rabin's discussion of "Aprite un po'" strongly invokes the notion of the character as performer; in this reading, Figaro wilfully fails to come up with any-

22 Patricia Lewy Gidwitz, "Vocal Profiles of Four Mozart Sopranos" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1991); "'Ich bin die erste Sängerin': Vocal Profiles of Two Mozart Sopranos," *EM* 19 (1991), 565–79; Rice, "Rondò vocali"; Rice, "Mozart and his Singers: The Case of Maria Marchetti Fantozzi, the first Vitellia," *OQ* 11 (1995), 31–52.

23 The reference is to Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice," in *Image – Music – Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 179–89.